

Information below is adapted from the Maine NRCS 'Structures for Wildlife Job Sheet'.

DESCRIPTION

Male wood ducks are stunning and easily recognized with bold markings. Males are iridescent chestnut and green with white chin and throat strap. Females are mottled brown with a teardrop eye ring and dark blue speculum (wing patch) with white edge. Both sexes have well-defined head crests and long, dark, square tails.

HABITAT

Unlike most ducks, they nest in tree cavities near water instead of on the ground. They also readily nest in man-made structures. The ideal habitat is wetland such as bottomland forests and swamps, freshwater marshes, beaver ponds, floodplains, and isolated wetlands. A good mix of open water an emergent vegetation and low-hanging shrubs will be beneficial and provide plenty of food and cover.

A mix of this type of vegetation provides an abundant food source for both young and adults. The young ducks eat mainly insects and adults eat mostly plant material.

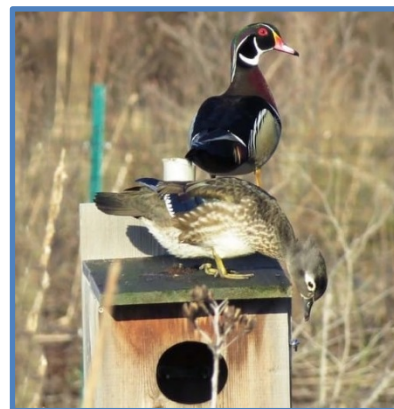
NEST BOXES

Increasing wood duck numbers can be accomplished by providing adequate nesting sites that are protected from predators. The following includes directions on the placement and construction of nest boxes for wood ducks.

Nest boxes should be placed over water or in woodland habitat near lakes, ponds, marshes and rivers. If boxes are placed over water, they should be mounted about 4 feet above the high water level. If placed above the ground, the box should be 30-150 feet from the water's edge and 10-20 feet above ground. Remember you will want to be able to access the box to maintain it so don't install too high. The distance to water should be free of obstacles to newly hatched ducklings. One nest box per 5 acres of suitable brood habitat is suggested and 600 feet between boxes. It is preferable to mount boxes proximal to brood rearing habitat.

The box dimensions should be about 10" x 12" and about 24" in height. The opening should be a 4" diameter oval, about 18" above the floor. Place 5-6 inches of wood shavings in the bottom of the box. Hardware cloth on the inside of boxes below the entrance will help ducklings climb out of the nest when they are ready to leave. Old nesting material must be cleaned out and more wood shavings should be added each year during the winter.

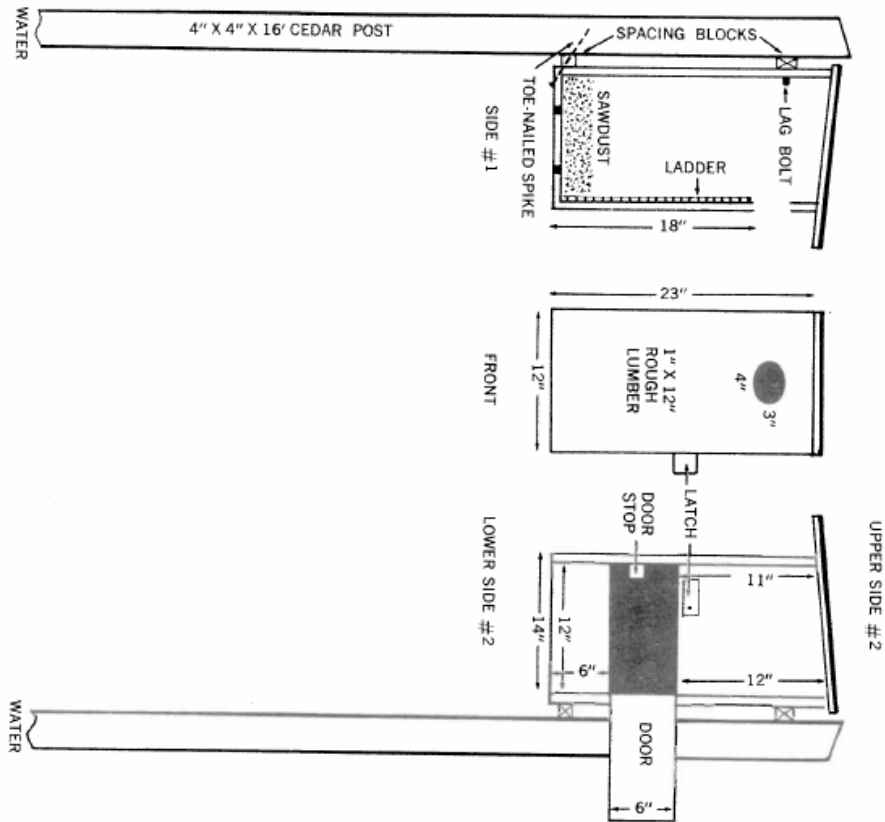
Predator guards, particularly against raccoons necessary. These can be constructed in several ways. A large, cone-shaped sheet-metal guard attached to the post (shown below), or a metal sandwich around the post should keep predators out of the nest box. The guards should fit tight enough to prevent snakes from squeezing through.



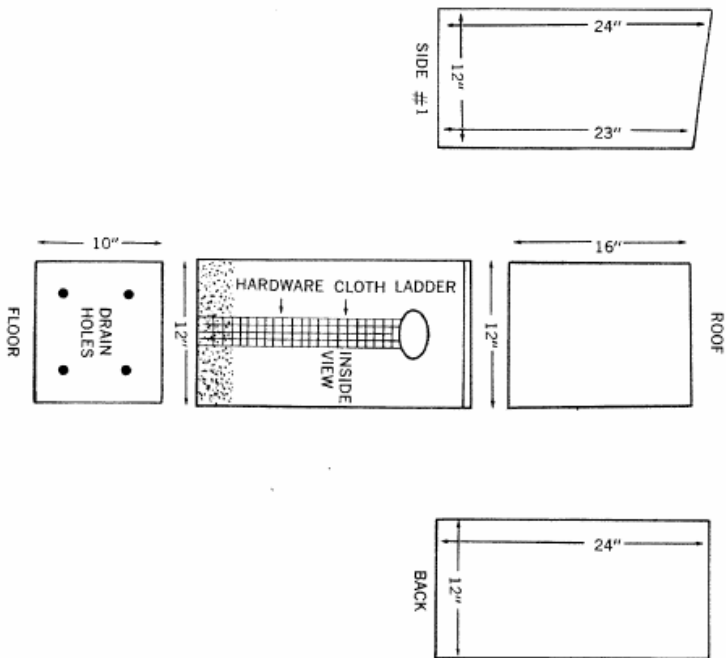
The following drawings are from '[Nest Boxes for Wood Ducks](#)' by the National Fish and Wildlife Service

STANDARD WOOD DUCK NESTING BOX

This nesting box is cheap to build, easy to maintain and, properly safe-guarded, inaccessible to such nest predators as raccoons, snakes, and squirrels.



The box should be constructed of unplanned cedar, cypress, or other weather-resistant lumber. It should NOT be painted, stained, or creosoted. As the diagram indicates, the entrance should be oval-shaped with the broadest distance horizontal. On the inside front of the box, beneath the hole, a strip of screen or hardware cloth should be tacked to provide the ducklings a means of escaping the box.



649 – Structures for Wildlife Implementation Requirements

MATERIALS

Nails	25—8 or 10-penny, zinc-coated.
Spike	1—4 + inch.
Lag bolt	1— $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch, 6 inches long.
Hinge	1—3-inch cabinet + screws.
Hardware Cloth	18-inch strip cut at least 3 inches wide. (All sharp ends should be bent under.)
Post	1, 4" X 4", 16 feet long. (Should be cypress, cedar, or a preservative-treated wood.)
Plus	Enough sawdust, wood-chips, or crumbled rotten wood to form a 3-inch nest base in each box.

Use rust-proof screws or nail that are long enough to hold securely despite rough handling and weathering.

Bore four $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch drainage holes through the floor.

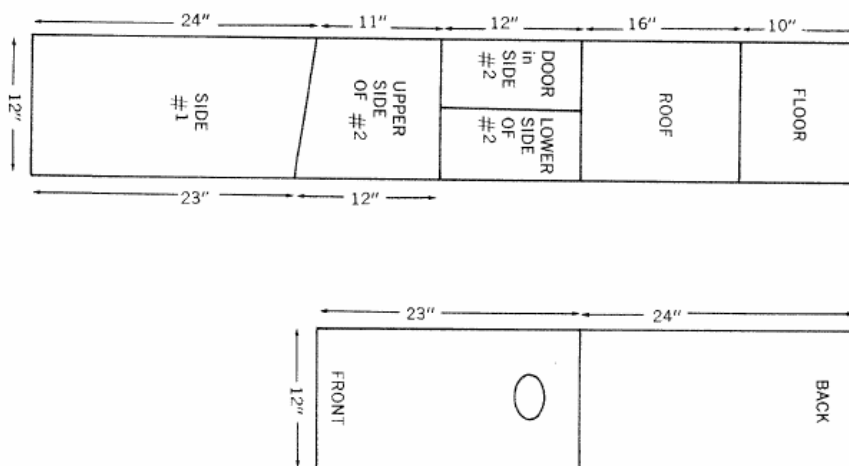
Tack a strip of $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch mesh hardware cloth cut about 18" X 3" from the bottom of the box to the hole. This is necessary in order for the ducklings to be able to climb out the nest.

Spray the inside of the box with Iysol or other disinfectant prior to the nesting season to discourage wasp and bees from moving in.

Wood ducks will nest in close proximity, but for the best results, the boxes should be grouped in clusters of half-a-dozen or so spaced so that each is no less than 50 feet from any other.

Each nest box must be cleaned and replenished with sawdust or wood chips each January.

10 LINEAR FEET OF 1' X 12" ROUGH LUMBER



PREDATOR GUARD

Cone-shaped, sheet-metal guard for protecting nest structures from predators. At right is layout for cutting 3 predator guards from a 3' x 8' sheet of 26-gauge galvanized metal. When installing the guard, overlap the cut edge to the dotted line. To facilitate cutting (on solid lines only) follow the sequence of numbers. Make circular cuts in counterclockwise direction. To make initial cut on line A—B, make a slot at A with a cold chisel. Use tinsnips and wear leather gloves.

